



TEACHING NOTES

Arno and His Horse

Title

Arno and His Horse

Author

Jane Godwin

Illustrator

Felicita Sala

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Plot

When Arno loses his precious toy horse, all the kids in town help him to look for it. They search everywhere! Will Arno ever see his horse again?

Themes

Family **Loss**
Memory **Grief**
Community
Dreams
Self-soothing

Discussion Topics

- * Do you have a favourite toy? What makes it so special to you?
- * How do you feel after reading this book?
- * What does this book make you think about? Did it remind you of another story you've read, or of something that's happened in your life?



ACTIVITIES



Show and tell

Bring your favourite toy to school, or draw a picture of it, and if you feel comfortable, tell the class what you love about it.

Storytelling

Tell a story about losing something precious and then finding it again. Will it be found in a super wild or unlikely place, or somewhere really obvious?

Craft

Use modelling clay to make a little toy horse, and just like Grandpa did, give it to someone you love.

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY



Jane Godwin is an Australian children's book publisher, and also the highly acclaimed author of over twenty books for children, across all styles and ages. Her work is published

internationally and she has received many commendations, including the Queensland Premier's Award (Children's Books), the Aurealis Award, and the Animal Welfare Award, and shortlistings in the CBC Book of the Year Awards, the Prime Minister's Literary Award, the New South Wales State Literary Award (Patricia Wrightson Prize), the YABBA Awards, the Speech Pathology Awards, The Family Award for Children's Books, and the Australian Book Industry Awards.

ILLUSTRATOR BIOGRAPHY



Felicita is a self-taught illustrator and painter. She graduated in Philosophy from the University of Western Australia. She has illustrated many picture books, contributed her art to magazines

and newspapers, and has also worked on papercut stop-motion animations. One of her books was included in The New York Times' Best Illustrated Picture Books of 2018, and in 2020 she won the Premio Andersen award in Italy for Best Illustrator. She loves to travel and can speak four languages but wishes she could speak Japanese. Felicity lives in Rome with her husband Gianluca and their daughter Nina.

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AUTHOR INTERVIEW

What was your inspiration for writing *Arno and His Horse*?

I live in Melbourne, but I've spent time in the Kimberley, Broome, Fitzroy Crossing, and Darwin, working with kids in schools and communities up there. I loved meeting and talking with all the kids, and there would be different groups of friends and family members who I'd see around the town — maybe at the shop, or at the footy oval, down at the river, or at the playground. These groups would often include kids of different ages and cultural backgrounds, and a range of personalities, and there was usually at least one dog who would hang out with them, too. They would be off on their own adventures. So the characters in the book have come from meeting kids who live up in that part of Australia. The book isn't set in any particular town, and the illustrator, Felicita, also brought her own memories and feelings about the Australian country when she illustrated the book, but in my mind it's somewhere in northern Australia.

I often seem to write books where something or someone gets lost! Arno's horse was originally a truck, based on my cousin, who when we were kids would insist on taking several small Matchbox cars to the beach. One would often end up buried and just when we were all ready to go home, we'd all have to stop and look for it. But after talking with the old stockmen around the Fitzroy Crossing area, I changed the toy to a horse, and the story then developed in new and different ways. My own father had recently died, and I was thinking about how sometimes

with people we love, we can still feel them near even when they're gone. Sometimes we feel this through dreaming.

Can you tell us how you first became a writer?

When I was at school, I wasn't the best writer in the class, but I loved reading and stories. I didn't set out to be a writer, but I knew I wanted to work with children and young people. I wanted to be a photographer, a teacher, or a child psychologist! After uni, I worked as an editor at a big publishing company for several years, and a friend who I worked with suggested I write a non-fiction picture book for a series we were making. It took me three years to write that book because I was so terrified that I couldn't do it, but when it was published people seemed to like it, and so then I tried some fiction stories, and I found I really enjoyed writing — so that's what I kept doing! I'm really glad now that I'm a writer.

Who are some of your favourite picture-book creators?

I have so many! This could be a very long list, but I'll just mention a few. In Australia, I love Anna Walker's work, and Andrew Joyner, Allison Colpoys, Maree McCarthy Yoelu, Sophie Beer, Debbie Coombes, and Felicita Sala (although Felicita lives in Italy, she is Australian and was born in Perth). Picture-book creators from overseas whom I admire include Blanca Gómez, Jenny Løvlie, Joseph Coelho, Beatrice Alemagna, Britta Teckentrup, Isabelle Arsenault, Julie Morstad, and Sydney Smith. I'd better stop there!

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